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U.S.: Over 130,000 Russian troops now staged outside Ukraine

By E. KNICKMEYER, J. HEINTZ plomacy to try to stave off and AAMER MADHANI **Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Some airlines canceled flights to the Ukrainian capital and troops there unloaded fresh shipments of weapons from NATO members Sunday, as its president sought to project confidence in the face of U.S. warnings of possible invasion within days by a growing number of Russian forces.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke to President Joe Biden for about an hour, insisting that Ukrainians had the country under "safe and reliable protection" against feared attack by a far stronger Russian military, aides said afterward. The White House said both agreed to keep pushing both deterrence and dia feared Russian military offensive.

The Biden administration has become increasingly outspoken about its concerns that Russia will stage an incident in the coming days that would create a false pretext for an invasion of Ukraine.

U.S. and European intelligence findings in recent days have sparked worries that Russia may try to target a scheduled Ukrainian military exercise slated for Tuesday in eastern Ukraine to launch such a "falseflag operation," according to two people familiar with the matter. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about it.

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In this handout photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy works in his office in Kyiv, Ukraine, Sunday, Feb. 13, 2022.

Associated Press











U.S.: Over 130,000 Russian troops now staged outside Ukraine

Continued from Front

American intelligence officials believe targeting the military exercise is just one of multiple options that Russia has weighed as a possibility for a false-flag operation. The White House has underscored that they do not know with certainty if President Vladimir Putin has made a final determination to launch an invasion.

Moscow's forces are massing on Ukraine's north,

east and south in what the Zelenskyy has repeated-Kremlin insists are military ly played down the U.S. exercises. warnings, questioning the

A U.S. official updated the Biden administration's estimate for how many Russian forces are now staged near Ukraine's borders to more than 130,000, up from the more than 100,000 the U.S. has cited publicly in previous weeks.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the administration's conclusions.

ly played down the U.S. warnings, questioning the increasingly strident statements from U.S. officials in recent days that Russia could be planning to invade as soon as midweek. "We understand all the risks, we understand that there are risks," he said in a broadcast Saturday. "If you, or anyone else, has additional information regarding a 100% Russian invasion starting on the 16th,



A view of Ukraine's national flag waves above the capital with the Motherland Monument on the right, in Kyiv Sunday, Feb. 13, 2022.

Associated Press

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please forward that information to us."

But while Zelenskyy has urged against panic that he fears could undermine Ukraine's economy, he and his civilian and military leaders also are preparing defenses, soliciting and receiving a flow of arms from the U.S. and other NATO members.

A military cargo aircraft carrying U.S.-made Stinger anti-aircraft missiles and ammunition from NATO member Lithuania landed Sunday, bolstering the country's defenses against any attack by air.

Zelenskyy wore military olive drab at a drill with tanks and helicopters near Ukraine's border with Russian-annexed Crimea this weekend. In the nearby city of Kalanchak, some expressed disbelief that Putin would really send his troops rolling into the country.

"I don't believe Russia will attack us," said resident Boris Cherepenko. "I have friends in Sakhalin, in Krasnodar," he said, naming Russian regions. "I don't believe it."

In Kyiv, others expressed uncertainty whether any Russian move would be economic, military, or happen at all. One woman, Alona Buznitskaya, speaking on a central street of the capital bearing a few signs declaring, "I love Ukraine," said she was calm.

"You should always be ready for everything, and then you will have nothing to be afraid of," she said.

The U.S. largely has not made public the evidence it says is underlying its most specific warnings on possible Russian planning or timing.

"We're not going to give Russia the opportunity to conduct a surprise here, to spring something on Ukraine or the world," Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security adviser, told CNN on Sunday, about the U.S. warnings.

"We are going to make sure that we are laying out for the world what we see as transparently and plainly as we possibly can," he said.

The Russians have deployed missile, air, naval and special operations forces, as well as supplies to sustain an invasion. This week, Russia moved six amphibious assault ships into the Black Sea, augmenting its capability to land on the coast.



U.S., Japan, South Korea meet in Hawaii to discuss North Korea

By AUDREY McAVOY **Associated Press**

HONOLULU (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met his Japanese and South Korean counterparts Saturday in Hawaii to discuss the threat posed by nuclear-armed North Korea after Pyongyang began the year with a series of missile tests.

Blinken said at a news conference after the meeting that North Korea was "in a phase of provocation" and the three countries condemned the recent missile launches.

"We are absolutely united in our approach, in our determination," Blinken said after his talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Euiyong.

He said the countries were "very closely consulting" on further steps they may take in response to North Korea, but didn't offer specifics.

The three released a joint statement calling on North Korea to engage in dialogue and cease its "unlawful activities." They said they had no hostile intent toward North Korea and were open to meeting Pyongyang without preconditions.

Hayashi later told Japanese reporters the three ministers had "very fruitful" discussion on the North. He declined to give details on



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi walk out together at the end of a joint press availability following their meeting in Honolulu, Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022.

Associated Press

additional measures they cuts to the North's nuclear may take.

North Korea has a long history of using provocations such as missile or nuclear tests to seek international concessions. The latest tests come as the North's economy, already battered by decades of mismanagement and crippling U.S.led sanctions, is hit hard by pandemic border closures. Many see the tests as an attempt to pressure President Joe Biden's administration into easing the sanctions. The Biden administration has shown no willingness to do so without meaningful

program, but it has offered open-ended talks.

North Korea has rebuffed U.S. offers to resume diplomacy, saying it won't return to talks unless Washington drops what it says are hostile polices. The North bristles at both the sanctions and regular military exercises the U.S. holds with South Korea.

The tests also have a technical component, allowing North Korea to hone its weapons arsenal. One of the missiles recently tested — the Hwasong-12 intermediate-range ballistic missile — is capable of reaching the U.S. territory of Guam. It was the longest-distance weapon the North has tested since 2017.

North Korea appears to be pausing its tests during the Winter Olympics in China, its most important ally and economic lifeline. But analysts believe North Korea will dramatically increase its weapons testing after the Olympics.

The recent tests have rattled Pyongyang's neighbors in South Korea and Japan. South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who helped set up the historic

talks between North Korean leader Kim Jona Un and former President Donald Trump in 2018 and 2019, said last month that the tests were a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions and urged the North to cease "actions that create tensions and pressure." The Security Council initially imposed sanctions on North Korea after its first nuclear test in 2006. It made them tougher in response to further nuclear tests and the country's increasingly sophisticated nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

China and Russia, citing the North's economic difficulties, have called for lifting sanctions like those banning seafood exports and prohibitions on its citizens working overseas and sending home their earnings.

Blinken arrived in Hawaii from Fiji, where he met with Acting Prime Minister Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum and other Pacific leaders to talk about regional issues, especially the existential risk posed by climate change. It was the first visit by a U.S. secretary of state to Fiji since 1985.

He started his Pacific tour in Australia, where he met his counterparts from Australia, India and Japan. The four nations form the "Quad," a bloc of Indo-Pacific democracies that was created to counter China's regional influence.

Luján plans return to Senate in weeks for Supreme Court vote

who is recovering from a stroke in January, says he plans to be back at work in "just a few short weeks" to vote on President Joe Biden's forthcoming Supreme Court nominee.

In a video released Sunday by his office, the New Mexico senator said he is at the University of New Mexico Hospital after surgery to relieve pressure on his brain and soon will go to an inpatient rehabilitation facility for "a few more weeks." "I'm doing well. I'm strong.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dem- I'm back on the road to reocratic Sen. Ben Ray Luján, covery, and I'm going to make a full recovery," the 49-year-old Luján said in the video, which showed him seated next to two of his doctors. "I'm going to walk out of here, I'm going to beat this, and I'm going to be stronger once I come out." "Now I'm proud to report, then I'll be back on the floor of the United States Senate in just a few short weeks to vote on important legislation and to consider a Supreme Court nominee," he added. According to his office, the

Luján began experiencing dizziness and fatigue on Jan. 27 and checked himself into a hospital in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Luján was transferred to the hospital in Albuquerque for further evaluation and treatment. His absence from the Senate came as Biden considers a nominee to replace the retiring Justice Stephen G. Breyer. Biden has said he wants to announce a pick by the end of February.

In a 50-50 Senate, Luján's vote would be critical if Democrats wanted confirm Biden's nominee



Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chairman Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, D-N.M., talks to reporters on Election Day at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington, Tuesday, Nov. 6, 2018.

Associated Press

without the help of Repub-

"Rest assured, New Mexicans can know they will have a voice and a vote during this process," Luján said in the video. "That has never changed."



Hate crime probe sought in Mississippi attempted shooting

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS **Associated Press**

RIDGELAND, Miss. (AP) -Attorneys for a Black delivery driver are calling for a federal hate crimes probe of the attempted shooting of the driver in Mississippi, saying it's another example of Black Americans facing danger simply for going about their daily activities. The FedEx driver, 24-yearold D'Monterrio Gibson, was not wounded in the Jan. 24 incident. One of his attorneys, Carlos Moore, said Thursday that he believes police are not taking the investigation seriously. Two white men are facing charges, but Moore said the state needs to upgrade those charges to attempted murder.

Moore said Gibson had done nothing wrong before two white men tried to stop him, with one of the men holdina a aun.

"He was simply Black while working," Moore said during a news conference.

Justice Department spokesperson confirmed to The Associated Press on Thursday that the department received a request to look into the case and will review the request to determine any next steps.

Gibson said he was wearing a FedEx uniform and was driving an umarked van that FedEx had rented when he dropped off a package at a house in south Mississippi. He said as he was leaving, he noticed a white pickup truck pulling



FedEx driver D'Monterrio Gibson, second from left, stands with his legal team of attorneys, Rodney S. Diggs, left, Carlos Moore, second from right, as they listen to a James A. Bryant II, also a lawyer and member of their legal team, speak during a news conference in Ridgeland, Miss., Thursday, Feb. 10, 2022.

Associated Press

away from another house on the same large lot.

He said the pickup driver tried to cut him off as he left the driveway. Gibson swerved around him and then encountered a second man who had a gun pointed at the van and was motioning for him to stop. Gibson said the man fired as he drove away, damaging the van and packages inside. He said the white pickup chased him to the interstate highway near Brookhaven before ending the pursuit.

Two white men from 58-year-old Brookhaven, Gregory Charles Case and his son 35-year-old Brandon Case, were arrested and released on Feb. 1. Police told local news outlets that the elder Case was the suspected pickup driver, while Brandon Case was the man in the street. Gregory Charles Case is charged with conspiracy. Brandon Case is charged with agaravated assault.

The attorneys who represent the men — Terrell Stubbs for the father and Dan Kitchens for the son — did not immediately respond to two phone messages that the AP left for each of them Thursday. A person in Stubbs' office said he was in court, and a person in Kitchens' office said he was out of the office.

Gibson said Thursday that

treatment and is on unpaid leave from his job. "I have real bad anxiety

since the incident," Gibson

he is seeking mental health

Jim Masilak, manager of media relations for FedEx, said in response to questions from AP Thursday: "FedEx takes situations of this nature very seriously, and we are shocked by this criminal act against our team member. ... The safety of our team members is our top priority, and we remain focused on his wellbeing. We will continue to support Mr. Gibson as we cooperate with investigating authorities."

Nobody was injured but

the chase and gunfire have sparked social media complaints of racism in Brookhaven, about 55 miles (90 kilometers) south of the state capital, Jackson. The local NAACP chairman has called on city's Black police chief to resign, but the chief says he has no intention to do so.

"I'm not going anywhere until God makes that decision," Collins told the Daily Leader. "That's between me and God. Until God calls me I'm not worried about what anybody says." Moore compares the incident to the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-yearold Black man who was runnina empty-handed through a Georgia subdivision in 2020 when three white strangers chased him down and blasted him with a shotgun. The white men, including a father and son, were convicted of murder and sentenced to life. Defense lawyers said they suspected Arbery had committed crimes in their neighborhood, but prosecutors said there was no evidence of that. The three still face a federal hate crime trial.

About 68% of Brookhaven's 12,000 residents are Black. The city is in Lincoln County, where District Attorney Dee Bates said information will be presented to a grand jury for a decision on charges once police complete their investigation of the Gibson incident. Witnesses, including Gibson, will be able to testify.



Huntington High School senior Max Nibert holds signs he plans to use during a student walkout at the school in Huntington, W.Va. on Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2022.

Associated Press

Associated Press

West Virginia school super-**Huntington**, **W.Va.** (AP) — A intendent is investigating

West Virginia school district investigating religious event

a Feb. 2 religious revival state" and, "My faith, my event that occurred at Huntington High School, saying he believes some violated.

perintendent Ryan Saxe announced the investigation in a statement issued on Friday. About 100 students at the high school walked out in protest on Wednesday during an advisory period, chanting, "Separate the church and

choice." The Fellowship of Christian Athletes had invited Nik Walker Ministries to students' rights have been hold a revival at the school, which was advertised as a Cabell County Schools Su-voluntary event. School officials have said there was supposed to be a sign-up sheet to attend but that two teachers mistakenly took their entire classes.

That prompted complaints from some parents and from students who organized the walkout.

"It was reported to my staff that some students were reauired to attend a reliaious event during the school day," Saxe said in the statement. "At this point in the investigation, it is my belief that some students' rights have been violated. As the investigation continues, we must follow due process, which takes some time, in addressing any responsible employee while working to ensure a situation like this never occurs again."



U.S. suspends Mexican avocado imports on eve of Super Bowl

By MARK STEVENSON **Associated Press**

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico has acknowledged that the U.S. government has suspended all imports of Mexican avocados after a U.S. plant safety inspector in Mexico received a threat.

The surprise suspension was confirmed late Saturday on the eve of the Super Bowl, the biggest sales opportunity of the year for Mexican avocado growers though it would not affect game-day consumption since those avocados had already been shipped.

Avocado exports are the latest victim of the drug cartel turf battles and extortion of avocado growers in the western state of Michoacan, the only state in Mexico fully authorized to export to the U.S. market. The U.S. government suspended all imports of Mexican avocados "until further notice" after a U.S. plant safety inspector in Mexico received a threatening message, Mexico's Agriculture Department said in a statement.

"U.S. health authorities ... made the decision after one of their officials, who was carrying out inspections in Uruapan, Michoacan, received a threatening message on his official cellphone," the department wrote.

The import ban came on the day that the Mexican avocado growers



Recently harvested avocados at an orchard near Ziracuaretiro, Michoacan state, Mexico, Oct. 1, 2019.

packers association unveiled its Super Bowl ad for this year. Mexican exporters have taken out the pricey ads for almost a decade in a bid to associate guacamole as a Super Bowl tradi-

This year's ad shows Julius Caesar and a rough bunch of aladiator fans outside what appears to be the Colosseum, soothing their apparently violent differences by enjoying guacamole and avocados.

tion.

The association did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the ban, which hits an industry with almost \$3 billion in annual exports. However, avocados for this year's Su-

per Bowl had already been exported in the weeks prior to the event.

Because the United States

also grows avocados, U.S. inspectors work in Mexico to ensure exported avocados don't carry diseases that could hurt U.S. crops. It was only in 1997 that the U.S. lifted a ban on Mexican avocados that had been in place since 1914 to prevent a range of weevils, scabs and pests from enter-

The inspectors work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services. It is not the first time that the violence in Michoacan — where the Jalisco cartel

ing U.S. orchards.

is fighting turf wars against a collection of local gangs known as the United Cartels — has threatened avo-

Associated Press

cados, the state's most lucrative crop.

After a previous incident in 2019, the USDA had warned about the possible consequences of attacking or threatening U.S. inspectors. In August 2019, a U.S. Department of Agriculture team of inspectors was "directly threatened" in Ziracuaretiro, a town just west of Uruapan. While the agency didn't specify what happened, local authorities say a gang robbed the truck the inspectors were traveling in at gunpoint.

The USDA wrote in a letter

at the time that, "For future situations that result in a security breach, or demonstrate an imminent physical threat to the well-being of APHIS personnel, we will immediately suspend program activities."

Many avocado growers in Michoacan say drug gangs threaten them or their family members with kidnapping or death unless they pay protection money, sometimes amounting to thousands of dollars per acre.

On September 30, 2020, a Mexican employee of APHIS was killed near the northern border city of Tijuana.

Mexican prosecutors said Edgar Flores Santos was killed by drug traffickers who may have mistaken him for a policeman and a suspect was arrested. The U.S. State Department said investigations "concluded this unfortunate incident was a case of Mr. Flores being in the wrong place at the wrong time."

The avocado ban was just the latest threat to Mexico's export trade stemming from the government's inability to rein in illegal activities.

On Thursday, the U.S. Trade Representative's filed an environmental complaint against Mexico for failing to stop illegal fishing to protect the critically endangered vaquita marina, the world's smallest porpoise.

Saudi sees Cyprus as bridge between Europe, Middle East

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Saudi Arabia views Cyprus as a "bridge" between the Middle East and the European Union, helping the 27-nation bloc "understand what's going on" in the region, the Saudi foreign minister said Sunday. Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, speaking after talks with his Cypriot counterpart Ioannis Kasoulides, said that Cyprus helps "really focus the attention" on all the opportunities and challenges in the Middle East.

Cyprus has ramped up its



This image provided by Cyprus Press and Informations Office, shows Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal Bin Farhan Al-Saud, left and Cyprus Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides speaking to the media, during a press conference after their meeting, at the foreign ministry house in capital Nicosia, Cyprus, Sunday, Feb. 13, 2022.

Associated Press

outreach to Gulf states in broker as the closest EUrecent years to act as a member country to the region. He said both countries agree in the primacy of international law.

"If we do not all agree that international law is the primary guide of state relations, we risk the instability

for all," Al Saud said, "I think it's important that we all stand together to defend the primacy of international law or state sovereignty, a rejection of interventionism of all sorts."

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Sudan's top general lauds recent ties with former foe Israel

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Sudan's top general has lauded recent ties with Israel, saying that intelligence sharing between the two former adversaries helped arrest suspected militants in his country.

The two countries normalized relations late in 2020 as part of a series of U.S.brokered deals between Israel and four Arab countries. Israel and Sudan have since crafted security and intelligence relationships that have seen officials exchange meetings repeatedly in unannounced trips. Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, head of the ruling Sovereign Council, said exchange of intelligence has enabled Sudan to dismantle and arrest suspected militant groups in Sudan that "could have undermined the security of Sudan and the region."

Speaking in an an interview with Sudan's state-run TV aired late Saturday, Burhan said it is legitimate for Sudanese security and intelligence agencies to have ties and exchange visits with Israel.

He insisted his country's relations with Israel are not of a political nature, saying that no senior Sudanese of-



Sudan's head of the military, Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, speaks during a press conference at the General Command of the Armed Forces in Khartoum, Sudan, Tuesday, Oct. 26, 2021.

Associated Press

ficial has yet made a visit to Israel. He did not elaborate. There was no immediate comment from Israel. Israel has been silent on the October military coup in Sudan, led by Burhan, and the ensuring unrest there, indicating it intends to maintain normalized ties with Sudan.

Sudanese and Israeli officials exchanged unannounced visits in recent weeks. Most recently, a Sudanese security delegation visited Tel Aviv last week, following a visit by Israeli officials, including Mossad intelligence officers, to Khartoum in January.

In October, the then Sudanese justice minister, Nasredeen Abdulbari, and Israeli Cabinet ministers Idan Roll and Edawi Frej held a rare public meeting in the United Arab Emirates' capital of Abu Dhabi.

The normalization of ties with Israel paved the way for Sudan to reintegrate into the international community after two decades of isolation under former autocratic President Omar

al-Bashir.

Sudan was once one of Israel's fiercest rivals in the Arab world. It hosted the landmark Arab conference after the 1967 Mideast war at which eight Arab countries vowed never to make peace with Israel.

The Oct. 25 military takeover has upended Sudan's transition to democratic rule after three decades of repression and international isolation under al-Bashir. The African nation has been on a fragile path to democracy since a popular uprising forced the military to remove al-Bashir and his Islamist government in April 2019.

The coup triggered near-daily street protests, plunging the country further into turmoil. Security forces launched a deadly crackdown on protesters, killing around 80 people and wounding over 2,200 others injured since the coup, according to a Sudanese medical group.

The U.N., the U.S. and other Western government have pressured the military to end the crackdown on protesters and restore a civilian-led government to complete the country's transition. Congress members have also called for sanctions on military leaders in Sudan.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Molly Phee and the newly appointed U.S. special envoy for the Horn of Africa visited Sudan last month and said they made clear to the generals that "the U.S. "will consider measures to hold accountable those responsible for failure to move forward."

In the interview, Buran pushed back against threats of punitive measure, saying that sanctions and threats of sanctions will not helpful.



Relatives carry the body of Mushtaq Ahmed, 41, who was killed when an enraged mob stoned him to death for allegedly desecrating the Quran, in Tulamba, a remote village in the district of Khanewal in eastern Pakistan, Sunday, Feb. 13, 2022.

Associated Press

By ASIM TANVEER Associated Press MULTAN, Pakistan (AP) — An enraged mob stoned to death a middle-aged man

for allegedly desecrating

the Quran in a remote vil-

lage in eastern Pakistan, police said Sunday.

The custodian of a local mosque said he saw the man burning the Muslim holy book inside the mosque Saturday evening

Man accused of blasphemy stoned to death by mob in Pakistan

and told others before informing police, according to police spokesman Chaudhry Imran. The violence took place in a village in the district of Khanewal in Punjab province. Imran said police rushed to the scene, where a man was found surrounded by an angry crowd. Officer Mohammad labal and two subordinates tried to take custody of the man but the group began throwing stones at them, seriously injuring labal and slightly injuring the other two officers. Munawar Gujjar, chief of Tulamba police station, said he rushed reinforcements to the mosque but they did not arrive before

the mob had stoned to death the man and hung his body from a tree.

Gujjar said the victim was identified as Mushtaq Ahmed, 41, of a nearby village. "The ill-fated man has been mentally unstable for the last 15 years and according to his family often went missing from home for days begging and eating whatever he could find," he said. He said the body was handed over to the family. Mian Mohammad Ramzan, the mosque custodian, said he saw smoke inside the mosque, which is adjacent to his home, and rushed over to investigate. He found one Quran burned and saw a man attempting to burn another. He said people were starting to arrive for evening prayers as he was shouting for the man to stop.

Witnesses said a police team that reached the village before the stoning began took custody of a man but the mob snatched him away from them and beat the police as they tried to rescue him.

Gujjar, the area police chief, said investigators were scanning available videos to try to identify the assailants. He said police had so far detained about 80 men living in the mosque's surroundings but that about 300 suspects took part.





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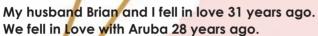
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David P Carroll.



VALENTINE'S DAY



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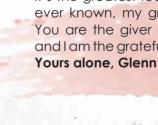
One happy Island! Jay and Linda Travers



Happy Valentine's Day to my Paulie Pooh Bear!! Love you with all my heart. Love PIGGY. We met in Aruba in December 2017 and got engaged in Aruba December 31 2019. I'm from Ontario, Canada and Paul is from New York, United States.



My JoAnn, 43 years of being known fully, seen completely and loved unconditionally. It's the greatest feeling I have ever known, my greatest joy. You are the giver of this love and I am the grateful recipient.





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Romance Blooms at the Hilton on Valentine's Weekend

PALM BEACH - The Holiday dedicated to love will be celebrated Valentine's Day weekend at the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino with a bouquet of activities inspiring friendship, affection and love.

At eforea spa, a special Valentine's menu for two, beckons patrons with a number of innovative treatments. The Mint Chocolate Toes for Two is an indulgent pedicure beginning with a butter brûlée milk soak, followed by smoothing and exfoliation with a fine-grain, sweet cream, salt scrub. Next a hot chocolate mask is applied loaded with nourishing vitamins and CoQ10 – powerful antioxidants, and finally, a massage with minty shea butter leaves, leaving you with a fresh and invigorated feel.

The Love Body Wrap, another decadent option, a delightful treatment for two, starting with a cocoon wrap loaded with vitamin E, and culminating with a certified organic shea sugar exfoliation, before a resveratrol wrap to replenish the skin with antioxidants, nutrients and silky juniper extract body oil.

The Heavenly Valentine's Meltdown, for the ultimate romantic escape, offers moments of pure bliss, where the skin is scrubbed with sweet cream, polished, then covered with a rich, dark chocolate softening mask, and cocooned in a hot butter brûlée whole milk wrap. The finish, a warm sweet cream body milk massage.

Continue the Valentine's weekend adventure with a memorable evening at Sunset Grille, starting a delectable dinner with a welcome glass of sparkling wine. Patrons have a choice of starters, and entrees, while dessert delivers temptation, a Trilogy of Strawberry Pie, Chocolate Lover Cake, Rose Mousse, with red fruits coulis. The three-Course Valentine's Dinner is served February 12th 14th.

The resort's Sunset Concierge Dinner, with toes in the





sand, features a special 3-course menu available exclusively on February, 14th. The evening begins with a welcome glass of sparkling wine and ends with a decadent 'Amores per Sempre' shared dessert for two, specially created by Executive Chef Olivier Falchi.

Enhancing the experience for the weekend, guests will have the opportunity to take photos on the beach during sunset with the resort's Pedicab, specially decorated with flowers and props for Valentine's celebration. This will be available February 12-14th.



















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How supply chain issues are crushing hotels — and your stay

By SALLY FRENCH of Nerd-Wallet

For many, supply chain issues mean something like the grocery store is out of oat milk, so you're stuck with soy instead. For hotels — an industry already hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic — supply chain issues are causing even bigger problems.

Vimal Patel knows this all too well. Patel is CEO of QHotels Management, which operates franchises of hotel brands, including some Hampton Inn, Holiday Inn and Best Western properties. Lately, he's scrambling to find towels, shampoos, notepads and other supplies his hotels run through (and run out of) due to supply chain problems.

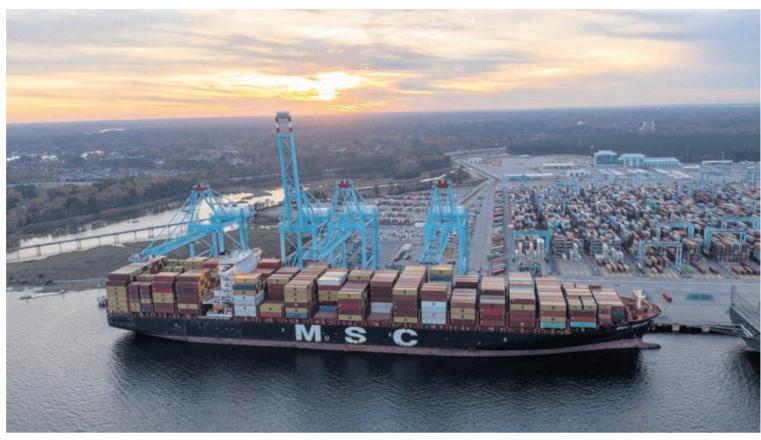
"Ever since the pandemic, serving paper products like plates and napkins, as well as food itself, has become a huge problem — and a customer service challenge," he says. "Guests often don't understand why a product is unavailable."

Things got heated at one of his hotels, which advertises 12-ounce cups of coffee.

"We could only find 8-ounce cups, and we couldn't find any lids," Patel says. "We had to use a substandard cup, because that's all we could get. That was deeply upsetting to some customers."

For weary travelers seeking to caffeinate, lidless coffee might feel like a reason to leave a one-star review, especially for unpracticed travelers who might not be accustomed to the myriad COVID-related travel changes. But here's why there's no point in crying over spilled milk.

HOW SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES AFFECT YOUR HOTEL STAY DELIVERIES CAN TAKE AN UNPREDICTABLY LONG TIME



The sun sets behind The Mediterranean Shipping Company ship MSC Meline, front, which is in the process of being loaded at the Virginia International Gateway Marine terminal Wednesday Dec 1, 2021, in Norfolk, Va.

Associated Press

Most of Patel's properties are franchises of larger brands and require conforming to brand standards. Patel typically orders items from an approved vendor, which previously took about 48 hours to ar-

"Now, it can take months," he says. "You're lucky to get it within three weeks."

Towels are typically reordered every other month, as they get discolored after enough use (and some just disappear). Yet, bulky items like these are tough to stockpile, since most hotels have limited storage space.

"We'll have a family of four use all the towels in the morning, and then ask for a second set in the evening," he says. "Sometimes we just don't have enough."

Amid the coffee cup shortage, Patel had to send an employee to Costco to buy whatever cups they could find. "With basic necessities,

it's hard to tell a customer, 'We don't have that,' so sometimes you just have to make it work," he says.

COSTS ARE HIGHER

The entire nation is witnessing inflation — and hotels are no different.

Hotels reported a 79% cost increase on day-to-day cleaning and housekeeping supplies, a 77% increase for linens and other soft goods, and a 77% increase in food and beverage supplies, according to a November 2021 survey of about 500 hotel operators conducted by the American Hotel & Lodging Association.

STAFFING ISSUES ARE ON-GOING

In a separate AHLA survey from October 2021, 94% of respondents said their hotels are understaffed (including 47% who say they are severely understaffed). Additionally, 96% of hotel operators said they are trying to hire, yet are strug-

gling to fill open positions.
And for an already overworked hotel employee, dealing with a customer upset about their undersize coffee cup can be extra challenging.

CONSTRUCTION CHAL-LENGES COMPOUND THE PROBLEM

The coffee chaos was small beans for Patel's business, which operates in Louisiana. Nearly half of his properties are closed due to flooding and roof damage in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida. He says local home improvement stores are out of materials, and construction workers are tough to hire.

While the hurricane brought extra challenges for Louisiana businesses, hotels nationwide are experiencing construction-related issues. In the first year of the pandemic, many hotels put off planned renovations.

Now, it might be too late to renovate without going over budget. Construction material costs jumped nearly 20% in 2021, according to an analysis by the Associated General Contractors of America. In a separate AGC survey from winter 2021, 90% of contractors attributed such issues to the supply chain, and 72% said projects take longer than

anticipated because of COVID-19.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING YOUR NEXT HOTEL STAY

Travelers are returning, but labor and materials still haven't — and the outlook isn't exactly promising. Of the AHLA survey respondents, 36% said they expect supply chain disruptions to last at least another year. For travelers, that means anticipated renovations might not have even started. It means you might not have the exact amenities you're used to — and that sometimes, the amenities you expected will not be available, period. Patel says he hopes customers will understand the challenges that the hotel industry faces.

"We're not cutting corners because we're trying to nickel and dime," he says. "It's simply the situation we're in."

And just as a hotel likely wants you to feel like you're at home, Patel says he hopes people realize the supply chain shortages felt at home are hitting his industry too.

"Whether it's finding groceries or a roof for your own home — they're the same challenges that businesses are facing, but 10 times," he says.





CROSSWORD By THOMAS JOSEPH

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Saturday's answer

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AXYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three Us, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different,

2-14 CRYPTOQUOTE

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OOW. SVW G V QRWWSA

OWWHA QM XBB RF CXNEUOZ

RQQHA. — WASVWN R. LBXNT Saturday's Cryptoquote: THE THINKING YOU DO BEFORE YOU START A JOB WILL SHORTEN THE TIME YOU HAVE TO SPEND WORKING ON IT. — ROY L. SMITH

TCM's Jacqueline Stewart puts Black film history in focus



This image released by TCM shows Jacqueline Stewart who will co-host a collection of films honoring Black History Month. **Associated Press**

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer LOS ANGELES (AP) — Film

scholar Jacqueline Stewart makes a rich contribution to TCM for Black History Month, leading discussions about "Selma" with its star, David Oyelowo, and highlighting the work of Oscar Micheaux and other pioneering filmmakers.

The result is both celebratory and thought-provoking.

"Our programing runs all the way from the 1920s to 2014, almost a century of African American filmmaking," Stewart said.

"We see the same kinds of themes, a call for racial justice. People will get a much deeper sense of the complexities of these questions and why we have to be raising these questions in our country."

The February slate honoring African American films and creators is just one aspect of how Stewart, TCM's first and sole co-host of color since 2019 and a University of Chicago professor, has upped the channel's

Focusing on Black film history once a year "can't be

the full-stop experience for TCM," said Pola Changnon, its general manager.

"Having Jacqueline at the table, she's a voice in driving the programing selections," Changnon said. "She's really great in pointing us to things that we might not have thought of before, not only films, but also other experts who can really bring life to these movies."

Stewart, whose academic focus is on silent films and Black cinema, was a TCM guest before she was brought in as the first host of the ongoing "Silent Sunday Nights" showcase for domestic and international films and shorts.

In 2021, the newly opened Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles named her its chief artistic and programming executive, with a portfolio including screenings, exhibitions and educational outreach. (Stewart is on sabbatical from the cinema and media studies department at the University of Chicago, where she earned a doctorate degree in English).

Last year was a banner one: Stewart received a fellowship from the MacArthur Foundation, an honor nicknamed the Genius Grant, for ensuring that overlooked Black filmmakers and audiences have "a place in the public imagination," as the foundation said.

She considers her work to be part of a larger and urgent American reassessment: "We all need to think more deeply about questions of racial equality and social justice" as the past several years have shown. "We've had some really deep conversations at TCM about what it means to show classic films at this historical moment, and how we can reflect on the legacies of misrepresentation in those films and an erasure of people of color," she said, and on "the sexism and homophobia, the transphobia, that we find in classic films."

Last year, for TCM's "Reframed: Classic Films in the Rearview Mirror" project, Stewart and her four cohosts examined blatant racial stereotyping and other demeaning elements in movies including 1927's "The Jazz Singer," 1939's "Gone With the Wind" and 1961's "The Children's Hour," which depicts same-sex relationships as shameful.

Stewart's appearances as a guest expert on TCM eventually put her in the co-host lineup with Ben Mankiewicz, Dave Karger, Alicia Malone and Eddie Muller.

"We were always so impressed with not only everything she knew coming in, but just her grace and presence in being on camera and communicating with another host about what she knew," Changnon said. "Not everyone can translate that kind of academic expertise" for viewers.

Stewart says she's pleased by the scope of TCM's Black History Month programming, which continues on Sundays through Feb. 27 and includes fellow scholars Racquel Gates and Samantha Sheppard.



Ransomware gang says it has hacked 49ers football team

By ALAN SUDERMAN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — The San Francisco 49ers have been hit by a ransomware attack, with cyber criminals claiming they stole some of the football team's financial data.

The ransomware gang BlackByte recently posted some of the purportedly stolen team documents on a dark web site in a file marked "2020 Invoices." The gang did not make any of its ransom demands public or specify how much data it had stolen or encrypted. The team, which is among the most valuable and storied franchises in the NFL and lost a close playoff game two week ago, said in a statement Sunday that it recently became aware of a "network security incident" that had disrupted some of its corporate IT network systems. The 49ers said they'd notified law enforcement and hired cybersecurity firms to assist. "To date, we have no in-

"To date, we have no indication that this incident involves systems outside of our corporate network,

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San Francisco 49ers' Jimmie Ward, left, is called for a penalty as he hits Los Angeles Rams' Odell Beckham Jr. during the second half of the NFC Championship NFL football game Sunday, Jan. 30, 2022, in Inglewood, Calif.

Associated Press

such as those connected to Levi's Stadium operations or ticket holders," the team said in a statement, referencing its home stadium.

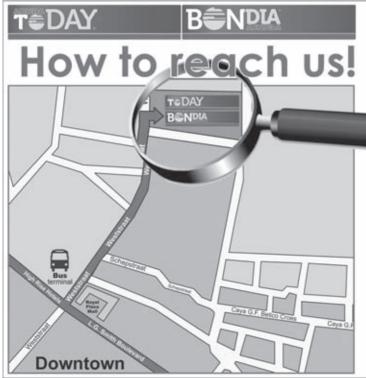
News of the attack comes two days after the FBI and U.S. Secret Service issued an alert on BlackByte ransomware, saying it had "compromised multiple US and foreign businesses, including entities in at least three US critical infrastructure sectors" since November.

Ransomware gangs, which hack targets and hold their

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data hostage through encryption, have caused widespread havoc in the last year with high-profile attacks on the world's largest meat-packing company, the biggest U.S. fuel pipeline and other targets. Western governments have pledged to crack down on the cyber criminals, who operate largely in and around Russia, but



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have little to show for their efforts.

In the past month, ransomware victims have included operators of maritime fuel depots in Belgium and Germany and media outlets in Portugal.

A cyberattack on the wireless provider Vodafone in Portugal this past week had all the hallmarks of ransomware, though the company's CEO for Portugal said it received no ransomware demand.



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Skiers struggle as real snow falls on Winter Olympics



Erin Jackson of the United States hoists an American flag after winning the gold medal in the speedskating women's 500-meter race at the 2022 Winter Olympics, Sunday, Feb. 13, 2022, in Beijing.

Associated Press

By BERNIE WILSON AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — The Winter Olympics finally look like, well, the Winter Olympics. Real snow fell in Beijing on Sunday for the first time since the Olympics began, giving the city the appearance and feel of a real Winter Games. There was fresh snow in the mountains as well, where all events have been contested on artificial snow. While the snow was mostly a welcome sight, up in the mountains it affected visibility and made it tougher for ski racers to make it down the hill, especially in the first run of the two-leg giant slalom.

Marco Odermatt of Switzerland handled the snow and poor visibility better than anyone else and won his first Olympic gold medal. "I really risked everything in the second run because I wanted not just the medal, I wanted the gold medal," Odermatt said. "It's difficult because you can lose everything but today it paid off."

While a light snow fell Saturday, it came down a lot harder on Sunday, the first time it snowed during an Alpine race during the Beijing Olympics. The heavy snow forced the second run to be postponed by 1 hour, 15 minutes. During the delay, workers cleared snow from the course with snow blowers and shovels.

"It was a hard day, with the conditions, with such a long wait between the two runs," Odermatt said. "It was more than five hours for me, it was such a long time to re-think everything and it was hard to stay focused. I tried to sleep some minutes in between.

"I actually never dreamt about it but now it still feels like a dream."

Many other skiers had a rough day on the course known as The Ice River at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center.

"It's a shame what the weather is like. I was hoping for the sun, like on all the other days. Couldn't see anything," said Luca de Aliprandini of Italy, who was sixth after the first run but skied off course and didn't finish the second run. "When I was going down, the flakes were big."

American skier Tommy Ford came in 12th.

"It's great conditions on the course, but you can't see it," Ford said.

"It was difficult for everyone," said Henrik Kristoffersen of Norway, who was eighth overall. A second women's downhill training run scheduled for Sunday was canceled.

CROSS-COUNTRY RELAY

The snow affected the men's cross-country relay ski race so much that workers used leaf blowers to clear it out of the tracks. The snow made the ski tracks slow, especially on the first two classic ski legs. Just like in the women's race, the Russian team opened a lead on the first leg and then held on for the gold medal. Sergey Ustiugov maintained more than a minute lead on the last lap over the two-man chasing group of Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo of Norway and Maurice Manificat of France.

Ustiugov grabbed a flag on his way to the finish line and won the 10-kilometer relay 1 hour, 54 minutes, 50.7 seconds. By comparison, the winning time in the four-man relay at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics was more than 20 minutes quicker.

GU'S RACE ON HOLD

Freestyle skier Eileen Gu has to wait a day to try to win a second gold medal at the Beijing Games after gusty wind and snow postponed the qualifying round for women's slopestyle.

Qualifying was pushed back to Monday and

the final to Tuesday. The switch avoids putting the gold-medal round directly against the Super Bowl, which is also being televised by NBC.

The men's slopestyle qualification also was switched from Monday to Tuesday, with its final now set for Wednesday.

The 18-old-year Gu was at the top of the hill stretching and getting ready for some warmup runs in the blustery conditions when qualifying was postponed. The snow was blowing sideways and the flags on the bottom of the course were whipping in all directions. Visibility also was low, which makes landing jumps off the massive kickers along the course dangerous.

Gu was born and raised in the United States but chose to compete for China, her mother's home country. Her victory in big air last Tuesday was hugely popular in China.

RUSSIAN DOPING

Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva continued to practice in the hours before the Court of Arbitration for Sport was to decide whether she will be allowed to compete this week. An expedited hearing was scheduled for Sunday, with a ruling expected sometime Monday.

A decision by CAS is expected roughly 24 hours before the 15-year-old Valieva is due on the ice at Capital Indoor Stadium for the short program on Tuesday. The overwhelming favorite, she drew the 26th starting spot Sunday among the 30 in the event. Valieva has yet to miss a scheduled practice since a drug test taken in December was flagged last Monday for traces of a banned heart medication. That was the same day the reigning European champion helped the Russian skaters win team gold with a dynamic free skate in which she became the first woman to land a quad in Olympic competition.

On several occasions since then, the stress appeared to have gotten to Valieva, including a moment during Saturday's practice session when she fell during a triple axel and eventually skated to the boards and tearfully hugged her embattled coach, Eteri Tutberidze.

JACKSON'S HISTORIC GOLD

Erin Jackson won gold in the 500 meters to become the first Black woman to win a speedskating medal at the Winter Olympics. With a time of 37.04 seconds, she gave the Americans their first speedskating medal at the Beijing Games. The 29-year-old Jackson joins fellow American Shani Davis as the only Black athletes to win Olympic speedskating gold medals.

ROEISELAND'S TRIPLE GOLD

Marte Olsbu Roeiseland held her focus in the blowing snow and shot cleanly in the last standing stop to win the women's biathlon 10-kilometer pursuit race. It was her third gold medal of the Beijing Olympics and fourth medal overall.

The Norwegian started the race with a lead because of her win in the sprint race and hit 19 of her 20 targets. She won in 34 minutes, 46.9 seconds.

In the men's race, Quentin Fillon Maillet of France hit all 20 of his targets despite howling wind and skied to his second Olympic gold, and fourth medal overall, in the 12.5-kilometer pursuit.



Super Bowl Live: Average ticket price \$6,136 on Sunday

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — The Latest on the Super Bowl:

Getting into this Super Bowl at the last minute will mean a big hit to the wallet.

StubHub says the get-in price Sunday was \$3,800, a jump of 10% from Saturday, and the average price for tickets sold was \$6,136. That's a dip of 8% from Saturday.

The site still had more than 1,400 tickets available Sunday morning.

Fans from California have bought nearly 40% more tickets over the last 24 hours and also nearly 35% of new tickets sold in that span.

The Cincinnati faithful have been busy with buyers from Ohio accounting for 8% of sales.

Joe Burrow is leading Cincinnati Bengals with Matthew Stafford all decked out in the Rams' modern throwback white jerseys. This is the first Super Bowl berth for each.

Burrow is the fastest to go from No. 1 overall pick to starting in this game.

Stafford had never won a playoff game before this postseason after the Rams traded for him. Stafford comes in with 49,995 yards passing and 323 TD passes. That's the most ever for a quarterback making his first Super Bowl appearance. Stafford needs only 209 yards passing to become the sixth player to reach 6,000 in a single season.

The "Who Dey!" fans are making themselves known inside SoFi Stadium.

concourses packed with people with Bengals jerseys and they are outnumbering Rams jerseys by almost a 4-to-1 margin. The most popular jersey is that of Joe Burrow's No. 9.

The Bengals faithful aren't waiting for kickoff either. They're walking around breaking into chants of "Who Dey!" inside the house of their opponent.

Super Bowl 56 could make history at kickoff before either the Los Angeles Rams and Cincinnati Bengals begin the opening drives.

The temperature two hours before kickoff was 85 degrees with the chance for the gauge to go even higher by the time the ball is kicked off. That would make this the hottest Super Bowl ever, topping the record of 84 set on Jan. 14, 1973, at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.

California has been dealeight locations in the region

posting record temperatures in the upper 80s and low 90s earlier this week.

Signs all around SoFi Stadium remind people to wear masks, though many people inside for Super Bowl 56 are walking around without masks even when not eating or drinking. President Joe Biden says he thinks people should be careful ing with a heat wave with if not for themselves but for their children and families.

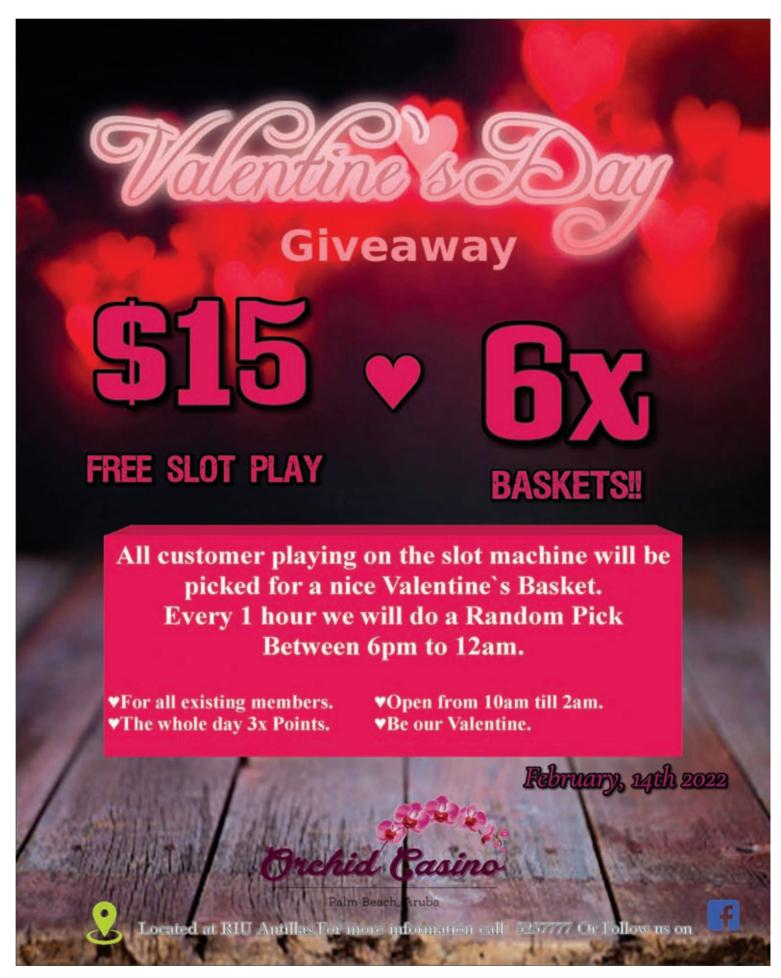
Biden was asked about people going maskless at the Super Bowl by Lester Holt in an interview shown during NBC's pregame show. The president said he loves how people talk about personal freedom. Biden said he doesn't consider people not wearing masks as practicing freedom. He says they put their own health and others in ieopardy.

He also encouraged peo-

ple to get vaccinated and to use the tools to help prevent death and serious illness

California will be easing mask requirements Tuesday, two days after the Super Bowl. q

The Cincinnati Bengals are the home team Sunday in the Super Bowl — technically. The home-field advantage belongs all to the Los Angeles Rams. 🔲







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PALM BEACH - When you think of a restaurant that pleases the needs of a whole family or a large group of people with all different tastes? Think Water's Edge Restaurant. Located at the shore of Aruba's most wonderful beach, The Eagle Beach Aruba. Water's Edge Restaurant is guaranteed to serve you a fantastic magical night to remember. Whether you prefer to enjoy the view from indoors air conditioned comfort, outdoors in the soft tropical breeze or under a palapa with your toes in the sand. This spectacular restaurant offers the best ocean view sunset or sky full of stars dinner while the crispy Caribbean night wind caresses your face and plays with your hair.

From the minute you arrive there will be a great staff welcoming you with the most contagious smiles and warmth. The intense menu with a great variety of appetizers, main courses and delicious desserts will not disappoint. Seafood, Steaks and international favorites. All on one menu specially made just for you.

Culinary Voyage

Start your gastronomic journey with a scrumptious appetizer such as the Maryland Crab Cakes, maybe the Crispy Calamari or the mouthwatering creamy Garlic Tarragon Shrimp. You can also opt for a classic French Onion Soup, a Lobster Bisque or the famously Water's Edge House Wedge, a crisp wedge of fresh romaine lettuce topped with homemade blue cheese dressing, diced tomatoes, chopped bacon, caramelized pecans and blue cheese crumbles, drizzled with balsamic reduction. This followed by the Chef's special of seafood such as Fresh salmon filet seasoned and grilled, topped with lemon cilantro butter and served with homemade mashed potatoes and fresh asparagus, a nice plate of Ahi Tuna or a succulent pasta dish like the Florentina Fettuccine Alfredo. Meat Lovers will have their fix with choices of a devourable 22oz. Bone-In "Tomahawk" Rib-Eye, pan seared in garlic infused oil and finished in the oven or our juicy N.Y Strip Loin, seasoned & grilled. All our steaks options are seasoned with a blend of kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper. Served with homemade mashed potatoes, seasoned vegetables and a choice of red wine reduction, green peppercorn demi glace, mushroom sauce, or bacon blue cheese butter. For extra sides the options are delectable. Fresh asparagus, seasonal vegetables, mashed or baked potatoes, fries or rice and beans. Combine your personal choice with one of the most exclusive wine from the

great selection of international wines to compliment your dish. Kids will enjoy every item of the specially compiled kids menu and there are also optional dishes for all vegans, vegetarians and gluten-free guests. To end the culinary voyage with some luscious sweetness, the desserts are wild. From a piece of coconut flan, NY cheese cake, carrot cake, chocolate brownie or our classic Tiramisu with kahlua and amaretto served with chocolate sauce and coffee jelly. Not to mention the fresh and light piece of key lime pie.

Creating memories

If you are planning a birthday dinner, here you will receive a nice bottle of champagne to take home with you to extend your experience even further whether on the beach or your own private balcony.

Live entertainment

Just about every day of the week, there is a different live entertainment by the best local artists for you to enjoy. Whether you're in a romantic mood, or more in a swinging mood, there is absolutely a night especially for you where you can combine great music with delicious cocktails mixed with concoctions. In addition, Water's Edge offers three daily Happy Hours from 12pm-1pm, 4pm-6pm and again from 9pm-10pm with all premium brands specially priced.

Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Whether you join us for breakfast, lunch or dinner, Water's Edge Restaurant & Bar offers a relaxed and inspirational dining experience overlooking the beautiful Eagle Beach with spectacular ocean views. Gather with friends and family for drinks and appetizers or a night of pampering and relaxation.



Thank you to all our guests

From the bottom of our hearts, we would like to Thank all of our guests who showed us so much love and support all through 2021, and hopefully will continue to do so in 2022. What we are most grateful for is that we could get back to doing what we love, which is looking after our guests. So, thank you for every dinner, lunch, breakfast, very to-go order, every glass of wine, every birthday, anniversary and date-night that you spent with us this last year. To our new guests, Welcome! We hope you to see you back soon!



"Water's Edge Restaurant is where magnificent beach views, amazing food and excellent service come together."

Water's Edge is open daily from 8am – 11pm

To reserve your table please call +297 586 9494/ ext 8106 or direct line +297 586-9494

For more information about the menus, entertainment and hours, please visit the website watersedge-aruba.com

